Thunderstorm (Straight-Line) Winds

No fatalities were caused by thunderstorm winds in 2004, but 8 injuries were reported.

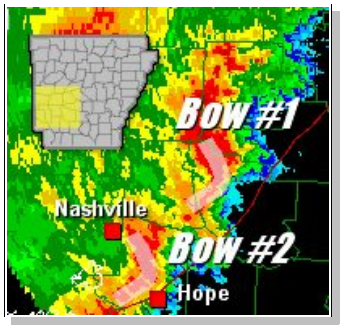
There were two injuries at Hope (Hempstead Co.), two injuries 3 miles northeast of Hope (Hempstead Co.), one injury at Magnolia (Columbia Co.), two injuries 5 miles south of Stamps (Lafayette Co.), and one injury 2 miles north of Taylor (Columbia Co.).

Some of the strongest thunderstorm winds reported during 2004 included:

86 mph: Walnut Ridge (Lawrence Co.).

85 mph: Winthrop (Little River Co.).

80 mph: 12 miles north of Nashville (Howard Co.), at Hope (Hempstead Co.), and 3 miles south of Ozark (Franklin Co.).



In the picture: Several bow echoes (i.e. boomerang shaped lines of storms) swept through the southwest half of Arkansas on 06/01/2004. The bows produced 80 mph wind gusts 12 miles north of Nashville (Howard Co.) and at Hope (Hempstead County).

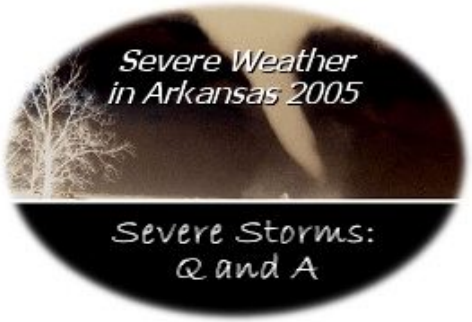
75 mph: DeQueen (Sevier Co.) and Prescott (Nevada Co.).

Winds such as these occur every year due to thunderstorms in Arkansas, and damage associated with such winds is often mistaken for tornado damage. If all of the winds listed above had occurred with a tornado, the intensity classification would have been F1. So, thunderstorm winds of such magnitude can be expected to produce damage just as severe as an F1 tornado.

Large Hail

No deaths or injuries due to hail were reported in Arkansas in 2004.

The largest hailstones reported during the year included:



For the past few years, AETN (public television) has broadcast a severe weather call-in show featuring a panel of experts including representatives from the National Weather Service, the media, and emergency management. The following are questions often phoned in by the public during the show...

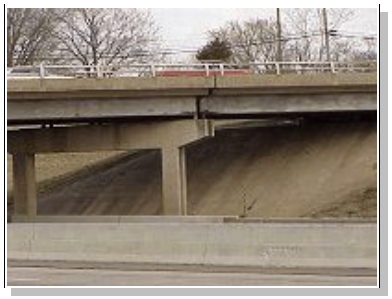
Q. What should I do if I am in my car and see a tornado?

A. The best option would be to drive to a sturdy building. All of the tornado safety rules can be found in a brochure published by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. This publication is updated every year. It is written by Newton Skiles, a senior forecaster at the National Weather Service, and Gary Huitink, an extension engineer at the Cooperative Extension Service. You can find the brochure online at:

http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-1024.pdf

Q. Is it true that taking shelter under a highway overpass is the wrong thing to do when a tornado is near?

A. Yes. A strong pressure drop around tornadoes creates a suction effect...which may pull you out from under the bridge. Tornadoes also produce rotational winds, with potential injury causing debris swirling around the bridge.



In the picture: Highway overpasses offer little protection from tornadoes.